

Hatshepsut

By Phyllis Naegeli

In Egypt, most pharaohs were men. Fathers usually passed on their throne to the firstborn son of their favored wife. However, Hatshepsut was the first of a few exceptions. She was an ambitious woman who ruled Egypt for twenty years. In a society where the leaders had always been male, how did this happen?

Hatshepsut ruled during the eighteenth dynasty. She was the daughter of Tuthmosis I and Ahmose. When her father died, her half-brother, Tuthmosis II was declared the new pharaoh. As was the custom, Tuthmosis II needed to marry a woman of royal blood. He chose Hatshepsut. Shortly after their wedding, he realized Hatshepsut's ambition was to make herself pharaoh. In order to prevent her becoming too powerful, he named his son, Tuthmosis III, his child by one of his lesser wives, to be the heir to the throne. However, Tuthmosis II died a few short years after becoming pharaoh. This gave Hatshepsut the opportunity she needed to take control.

At first, she reigned with Tuthmosis III as co-regent. The young pharaoh was just a boy, and Hatshepsut used his youth to her advantage. She began by announcing that the god Amun had spoken to her saying, "Welcome my sweet daughter, my favorite, the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Maatkare, Hatshepsut. Thou art the King, take possession of the Two Lands." In addition, she had herself declared as the wife of Amun, stating that the god had visited her and proclaimed his love for her. Gradually, Hatshepsut took on the role of pharaoh. She began to dress in the clothing of a man. She wore a false beard and dropped the female ending "t" from her name. She gained the favor of the priests of Amun by granting them great power. Thus, this determined woman took over the throne of Egypt, even gaining the acceptance of the people.

Hatshepsut's reign brought great economic advancements for Egypt. She expanded trade routes. She sent explorers to East Africa. They returned with great riches such as gold, ebony, ivory, and exotic animals. She had great obelisks built to commemorate her reign. The Temple at Karnak received extensive renovations, endearing her to the priests.

Hatshepsut's greatest achievement is the Mortuary Temple at Deir el-Bahri. Her architect (and supposedly the love of her life), Senmut, designed this beautiful temple for her. The Mortuary Temple is modeled after Mentuhotep I's (an 11th dynasty pharaoh) temple. It is built in the cliffs of the valley near the Peak of the Thebes. Here, Hatshepsut had her life story inscribed. These writings give us many clues to her reign. There were grand gardens at the temple. In addition, many sphinxes with the face of Hatshepsut adorn the entranceway and halls of this magnificent structure. However, her achievements were cut short. All record of her disappears after she had reigned twenty years.

During Hatshepsut's reign, Tuthmosis III, grew to be a man. He married Hatshepsut's daughter, Merira-Hatshepset. We are not sure how he dethroned Hatshepsut, but we know he was her successor. Sometime before he became pharaoh, Senmut disappeared. Shortly after, so did Hatshepsut. Her mummy has never been discovered. We do know however, that many of the references to Hatshepsut were obliterated or damaged on the walls of her mortuary and obelisks around Egypt. Most likely, there were hard feelings between Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III.

No matter what happened to her, Hatshepsut was able to rule Egypt well as the first female pharaoh. She left behind a great legacy in this ancient land.



Name _____



Date _____

Hatshepsut

Questions

- _____ 1. Egyptian pharaohs were usually _____.
A. female usurpers
B. the firstborn male child of the pharaoh's favored wife
C. the firstborn child of the pharaoh's favored wife
D. the strongest competitor in the royal family
- _____ 2. Tuthmosis II was Hatshepsut's _____.
A. half-brother
B. cousin
C. uncle
D. brother
- _____ 3. Tuthmosis II named his son, Tuthmosis III, as his successor because _____.
A. Hatshepsut was his mother.
B. Hatshepsut's ambitions to kill him were apparent.
C. Hatshepsut's ambitions to become pharaoh were revealed.
D. none of the above
- _____ 4. Which of the gods did Hatshepsut say had made her pharaoh?
A. Amun
B. Horus
C. Isis
D. all of the above
- _____ 5. Hatshepsut took on the role of pharaoh very quickly.
A. true
B. false
- _____ 6. Hatshepsut brought Egypt great economic gain during her reign.
A. false
B. true
- _____ 7. Hatshepsut's greatest achievement is _____.
A. the restoration of the Temple at Karnak
B. discovering Mentuhotep I's temple
C. the sphinxes she had built
D. The Mortuary Temple
- _____ 8. Tuthmosis III was married to _____.
A. Hatshepsut
B. Hatshepsut's daughter, Merira-Hatshepset
C. Hatshepsut's mother, Ahmose
D. none of the above

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